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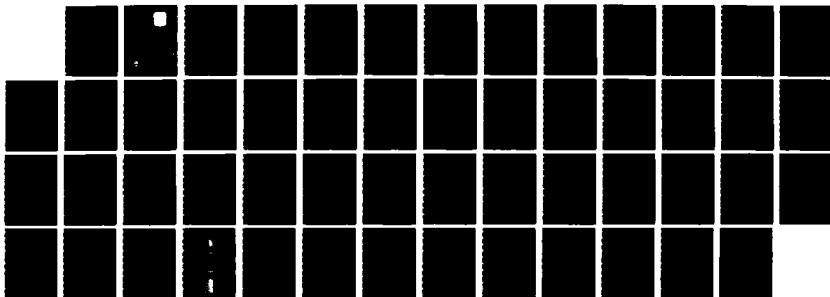
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ADVANCED COURSE IN EXECUTIVE SKILLS APPLICATIONS(U)
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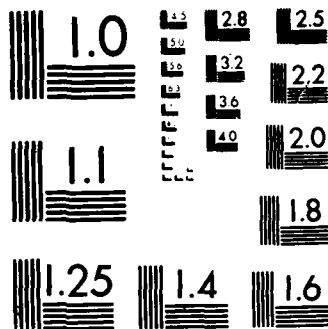
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AD-A182 925

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PERCEIVED UTILITY
OF THE
USAWC ADVANCED COURSE
IN
EXECUTIVE SKILLS APPLICATIONS

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL MORRIS R. FABER

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Executive Skills Advanced Course, the voluntary Executive Skills Assessment and Development Program, and the common course of instruction in Course 1: "Requirements of the Professional," to make them more complementary; make the Executive Skills Assessment exercise mandatory for all students and conduct it early in the academic year; reorganize the Executive Skills Advanced Course, especially the guest speaker concept; eliminate the student presentation of a book review; conduct a post-course survey of graduates approximately one year after completion of the course to obtain current student perceptions of the utility of the material presented.

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PERCEIVED UTILITY
OF THE
USAWC ADVANCED COURSE
IN
EXECUTIVE SKILLS APPLICATIONS

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

Lieutenant Colonel Morris R. Faber, FA

Colonel Hugh F. Boyd, III, EN
Project Adviser

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US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
30 April 1987

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Morris R. Faber, LTC, FA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Since the halfway point of the twentieth century, we have seen an explosion of knowledge and technology that has changed life for all of us. Increasingly significant to men entrusted with the stewardship of organizations is the rapid growth of knowledge in the social sciences, particularly those concerned with man's behavior in his organizational environment. Emerging as a central concern...is the utilization of this knowledge, the application...to the practice of management and the direction of organizations."¹

So says Richard Beckhard in his introduction of Douglas McGregor's book, The Professional Manager. His point, made in 1967, has even greater validity today. One has but to visit even the smallest library to find shelf after shelf of well-written, informative volumes on management, leadership, organizational development and effectiveness, strategy and planning in organizations, behavioral science skills and techniques, and the list goes on, to include many ideas on what attributes and skills are common to good executives, leaders, and managers. The "how-to" information is readily available and today's executive for the most part is more than well-equipped for the task at hand. Today's executives are generally intelligent, well-educated, have usually benefited from some form of management and executive apprenticeship while on the job, and have the combination of energy, ambition, skills, and foresight to enable them to be well aware of the specific direction in which they wish to go.²

The officers of the United States Army are certainly included in this grouping of managers, executives, and leaders, especially as they advance in military rank and seniority. The term "executive" particularly applies to those senior Army officers who are selected to attend the United States Army War College. Through demonstrated performance in positions of key leadership and responsibility, more often than not associated with battalion level command, these officers have shown both competence for the tasks immediately at hand and potential for success at higher levels of leadership and management with even more significant responsibilities.

One of the major purposes of the curriculum of the Army War College is to further prepare these officers to execute the responsibilities inherent in the positions for which they are destined. Many of those positions will require the application of specific executive skills which, in most instances, have heretofore neither been learned nor practiced at the level and to the extent necessary. Hence it is often necessary as part of the transition process to provide these officers an instructional opportunity to enhance their knowledge and application of selected executive skills.

BACKGROUND

During academic years 1984 through 1986, the Army War College offered an advanced course of instruction in executive skills development and application. This was an evolving course

which initially centered around assessing and enhancing officer competence in selected senior leadership and managerial skills. In 1984, each student enrolled in this course made a self-assessment of his proficiency in selected skills believed to be critical to successful performance at the senior officer level. This was followed by coursework focused on improving performance in selected skill areas.³

In 1985, the objectives of the course changed slightly, with the individual student assessment being replaced with a general group discussion of the skills needed by senior leaders and managers. This discussion was then followed by a series of classes focusing on the application of selected skills to further prepare the student for senior executive positions.⁴ In 1986, the objectives of the course remained the same as the previous year, with the selection of skill areas and focus of instruction pointed more toward developing a vision of the future and those skills that would facilitate that process.⁵ In 1987, this advanced course is again offered in the same general format as in 1985 and 1986. One major difference, however, is that the objective of the course no longer seeks to "enhance competence", but rather to "enhance understanding" of selected executive skill areas.⁶

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

While benefits to students enrolled in this course will certainly continue to accrue, the content of the course may or

may not be on target. In other words, the student may or may not be exposed to the knowledge and skills they expected, to what they feel they need, or to what their experiences and the experiences of others have identified as necessary. Aside from an end-of-course critique submitted by each student during the last session of the course, there has been no apparent effort to assess the utility of the material provided to these students, especially after they have had the chance to apply their enhanced knowledge and skills in actual duty positions.

The purpose of this study is to survey former War College graduates from the Classes of 1984, 1985, and 1986, who completed the advanced course in executive skills and determine their perceived usefulness of the course. The results of this survey and additional comments from respondees then formed the basis for recommendations to more closely align course objectives and design with student perceptions of need and utility.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PAPER

Chapter I offers a brief introduction and background to the purpose of this paper. Chapter II discusses the survey conducted to gather essential data from former graduates of the classes of 1984, 1985, and 1986. Chapter III presents an analysis of the survey results and a discussion of additional student comments. Chapter IV offers conclusions concerning the conduct of the executive skills advanced course and some recommendations aimed at improving the overall course. At Appendix 1 is a copy of the

survey instrument used to collect data. Appendix 2 is a compilation by academic year of the additional comments received from respondees. At Appendix 3 is the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer analysis of survey responses with cross-tabulation of the course assessment questions with selected background elements. This analysis is omitted from the paper due to length, but is available as a separate appendix upon request.

ENDNOTES

1. Douglas McGregor, The Professional Manager, p. xv.
2. Dr. Albert Ellis, Ph.D. Executive Leadership: A Rational Approach, p. 11.
3. US Army War College, Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, Advanced Courses Program Syllabus for Academic Year 1984, "Executive Skills: Assessment and Development," pp. 1, 5.
4. US Army War College, Department of Command Leadership, and Management, Advanced Courses Program Syllabus for Academic Year 1985, "Executive Skills: Applications," pp. 1, 5.
5. US Army War College, Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, Advanced Courses Program Syllabus for Academic Year 1986, "Executive Skills: Applications," pp. 1, 5-7.
6. US Army War College, Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, Advanced Courses Program Syllabus for Academic Year 1987, "Executive Level Leadership and Management," pp.1, 5-7.

CHAPTER II

CONDUCT OF THE SURVEY

To determine the perceived usefulness of the Executive Skills Advanced Course required surveying former students presently serving the Army in the field. The target population of the survey was limited to those Army officers of the classes of 1984 through 1986 who completed this advanced course. This population totaled 81 subjects; 29 in the Class of 1984, 28 in the Class of 1985, and 24 in the Class of 1986. Names of the officers were obtained through the Directorate of Academic Affairs, and last known addresses were obtained from the Directory of Former Graduates and the Records Branch of the War College Secretariat.

Because of the slight differences in the program of instruction for each class year, development of one survey to apply to all three groups was a challenge. However, the small population and relatively narrow focus of the survey topic warranted a single instrument. Further, because of the nature of the target population and the demands placed on their time by current duties, it was deemed essential that the survey be limited to no more than four pages, to include necessary background data. To facilitate analysis and make response as easy as possible, a standard Scan-Tron coding form was used to record responses.

The survey consisted of two sections: background data and course assessment. Each section was two pages long, and a separate blank page was provided for additional written comments. The background data section captured information about the respondent which was used in part to determine if certain personal and professional factors had any relevant relationship to the course assessment. It also allowed the segregation of responses by class necessary to isolate program of instruction differences as appropriate.

The course assessment section consisted of 18 questions addressing particular skills taught during the advanced course. Each skill area surveyed included a brief description of the material presented during that session. Responses were arrayed on a scale from 1 to 4 to indicate the degree of perceived usefulness of each area. Responses of "have not used" and "unable to judge" were also provided.

Because of the nature of the survey and the world-wide spread of the target population, approval of the survey by the US Army Soldier Support Center-National Capitol Region (SSC-NCR) was required. This process, although time-consuming, was beneficial and the interface with survey experts at SSC-NCR resulted in a better survey instrument. A copy of the survey is at Appendix 1.

Eighty-one (81) surveys were mailed, each including a franked, self-addressed return envelope. Twenty-one days were allowed for return of responses; however, responses were received and included in the study up to 31 days after initial mailing. Only one response was received after the analysis began and was

not included in the SPSS computations. Sixty (60) responses were received, representing 74.1 percent of the target population. Responses received by War College class were: Class of 1984, 83 percent; Class of 1985, 68 percent; and Class of 1986, 71 percent.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS

Computer analysis of the responses to the survey was accomplished using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS is a comprehensive system of computer programs specifically designed for analysis of social science data. It allows superb flexibility in data transformation and manipulation to achieve desired analysis objectives.¹ SPSS features used in this study were limited to simple descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, and cross-tabulation of selected background elements with course assessment questions.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION RESULTS

Of the 60 responses received, 53 came from serving Army colonels, 5 from lieutenant colonels, and 2 from general officers. Twenty-three (23) officers currently serve on Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA) staff or Major Army Command (MACOM) staff, 16 are in command of a TO&E or TDA organization, 6 are in executive officer or chief of staff positions, and 15 hold a variety of other positions not specifically identified. Of the 60, only 3 have never held a command position, while 49 have commanded at the battalion or brigade level and 3 have commanded at the community or other

levels. Nineteen (19) respondees are combat arms officers, 13 are combat support officers, 24 are combat service support officers, and 4 are in the professional services (doctors, lawyers, chaplains, etc.). Four (4) respondees have only a bachelor level college degree, while 50 have a masters degree and 6 hold doctoral level degrees. Sixteen (16) respondees have had no formal civilian education or training in executive skills. Thirty (30) respondees have had from one to four civilian courses, seminars, or workshops, and 8 have had more than 10 such courses. As previously indicated, 24 of 29 respondees were from the Class of 1984, 19 of 28 from the Class of 1985, and 17 of 24 from the Class of 1986. Twenty-four (24) useful additional comments were received from all respondees. These are shown at Appendix 2 and will be discussed later in this chapter.

COURSE ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Eighteen (18) questions were used to assess the perceived usefulness of the material presented during the executive skills advanced course. Table III-1 shows the major subject area of each question, the mean response, standard deviation, most frequent response, and the value scale used in responding to each question. It is accepted that the small size of the target population could make any detailed statistical analysis somewhat suspect. However, for purposes of this study, the 74.1 percent response rate and the relative numbers obtained provide a reasonable, useful, and best-available basis for an analysis.

Question Number	Subject Area	Mean	Std Dev	Most Frequent Response
8	Communication Skills	2.83	1.080	3
9	Managing Goals/Objectives	2.97	1.100	3
10	Organizational Climate	3.00	1.120	3, 4
11	Time Management	2.87	1.030	3
12	Managing Conflict	2.88	0.885	3
13	Negotiation Skills	2.75	1.140	3
14	Creative Problem Solving	2.73	0.990	3
15	Managing Groups	2.92	0.962	3
16	Group Leadership	3.03	0.920	3
17	Executive Leadership	2.88	1.110	3
18	Decisionmaking	2.73	0.900	3
19	Aids to Complex Decisionmaking	2.37	1.310	2
20	Developing Organizational Strategy/Strategic Planning	2.80	1.130	2
21	Managing Change	2.90	1.000	3
22	Corporate Management Skills	2.25	1.410	2
23	Organizational Excellence	2.83	1.090	3
24	Organizational Context	2.85	1.060	3
25	Student Presentation	2.19	1.330	2

VALUE SCALE USED

- 0 Have Not Used
- 1 Not Useful
- 2 Marginally Useful
- 3 Somewhat Useful
- 4 Extremely Useful
- 5 Unable to Judge

TABLE III-1: SURVEY RESPONSE MEAN BY SUBJECT AREA

For purposes of this study, a response of "somewhat useful" (3) or "extremely useful" (4) was viewed as positive, and a response of "not useful" (1) or "marginally useful" (2) was considered to be negative. Responses of "not used" (0) and "unable to judge" (5) were not considered except in those instances in which there were more than five such responses for any specific question. These will be discussed later in the chapter.

In gross terms, using the aforementioned parameters, the course assessment was positive in all but three subject areas. Two subjects perceived to be the most useful were organizational climate and group leadership. Managing goals and objectives, managing groups, and managing change were also perceived as highly useful skills. Those subject areas falling in approximately the middle of the positive response group include managing conflict, executive leadership, time management, organizational context, communications skills, and organizational excellence. The least positively perceived subject areas were developing organizational strategy and strategic planning, negotiation skills, and creative problem solving.

Some of the above subject areas, while evaluated by the majority of respondents to be useful to some degree, were specifically presented to only certain classes.

Organizational excellence was a specific subject area presented only to the Class of 1985. Fifty-eight (58) percent of the respondents from that class perceived this subject to be moderately useful. However, the popularity the book, In Search

of Excellence, used as a basis for that period of instruction and the tendency for frequent reference to it in the majority of discussions of corporate management and leadership, probably influenced the responses received from all classes, regardless of how it was presented during the course.

Organizational context was presented specifically to the Class of 1984, but was a discussion topic common to all three classes. Perceptions in each class were similar, with the Class of 1984 being 55 percent positive.

Developing organizational strategy and strategic planning was presented as a subject area to the Class of 1986, but was an implied subject in the other class years. Class of 1986 responses were 53 percent positive compared to an overall response of 60 percent positive. It is likely, too, that there could have been some minor confusion in recalling instruction in strategic planning, given the amount of common course instruction in military strategy and planning, and its close relationship to the subject area presented in the advanced course.

Three subject areas were perceived as being of marginal use to respondees: aids to complex decisionmaking, corporate management skills, and the student presentation, which ranked lowest of all subject areas surveyed. These three subject areas also had the highest frequency of "not used" and "unable to judge" responses, with the majority being "not used". That the student presentation was ranked low is no surprise, given the time of the academic year in which the course is presented, the

number of writing requirements already completed in the common courses of instruction, the Military Study Project, written and/or oral presentation requirements in other advanced courses conducted concurrently with the Executive Skills Advanced Course, and, for some, the competing demands of the Shippensburg College graduate studies program.

Corporate management skills as explained in the survey had applicability to all three classes, each of which perceived it to be of little utility. This response could have been prompted in part by a recent article in Army magazine suggesting that some senior Army leaders are becoming too much like corporate executives.¹

Aids to complex decisionmaking was presented as a specific subject to only the Class of 1985, but was included to some degree in material concerning decisionmaking presented to the other classes. Responses from the Class of 1985 to this question were, however, 80 percent negative.

Table III-2 recapitulates the rank order of the course assessment question subject areas from most to least positive using the mean response for each question.

CROSS-TABULATION RESULTS

The SPSS package enables a statistical comparison to be made between two questions to determine the relationship, if any, between two variables.² Four such comparisons were made in this study using background data questions for comparison with

Rank Order	Question Number	Subject Area	Mean	Std Dev
1	16	Group Leadership	3.03	0.920
2	10	Organizational Climate	3.00	1.120
3	9	Managing Goals/Objectives	2.97	1.100
4	15	Managing Groups	2.92	0.962
5	21	Managing Change	2.90	1.000
6	12	Managing Conflict	2.88	0.885
7	17	Executive Leadership	2.88	1.110
8	11	Time Management	2.87	1.030
9	24	Organizational Context	2.85	1.060
10	8	Communication Skills	2.83	1.080
11	23	Organizational Excellence	2.83	1.090
12	20	Developing Organizational Strategy/Strategic Planning	2.80	1.130
13	13	Negotiation Skills	2.75	1.140
14	18	Decisionmaking	2.73	0.900
15	14	Creative Problem Solving	2.73	0.990
16	19	Aids to Complex Decisionmaking	2.37	1.310
17	22	Corporate Management Skills	2.25	1.410
18	25	Student Presentation	2.19	1.330

TABLE III-2: RANK ORDER OF SUBJECT AREAS BY DEGREE OF POSITIVE RESPONSE USING NUMERICAL MEAN

the course assessment questions. The background questions used were: duty position, branch, amount of civilian training in executive skills, and AWC class, as already mentioned.

The comparison of the course assessment questions with branch of service of the respondent and with the amount of civilian training in executive skills received by each respondent does not present any variance that would provide a meaningful factor for revision of the Executive Skills Advanced Course. The comparison, however, of the course assessment subject areas with duty position does provide some interesting results which may be a consideration in course design and marketing of the course to students.

In most subject areas, both HQDA and MACOM staff officers responded positively; however, MACOM staff officers were generally more positive than those of HQDA, particularly in the harder skill areas. Commanders of TDA organizations were more positive in their responses than were commanders of TO&E organizations, which may result from the presence of more civilians in the TDA workforce, less clearly defined heirarchical structure, and perhaps more likelihood of interface with the civilian corporate world. Chiefs of staff and executive officers of both TO&E and TDA organizations were generally very positive, especially in the more traditional management skill areas.

While these observations are not necessarily conclusive, they do suggest the possibility of a linking of the Executive Skills Advanced Course to specific duty assignments likely to occur subsequent to War College completion, and might enhance

interest as well as motivation in the course.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM RESPONDEES

The survey included a separate sheet for additional comments from respondents. Twenty-eight (28) of these sheets were returned with 24 containing useful comments. Twelve (12) of these came from the Class of 1984, seven (7) from the Class of 1985, and five (5) from the Class of 1986. Comments ranged from very positive to very negative, and from very general statements concerning course design and presentation to very detailed points addressing specific skill areas. Because of the differences in each class year's course structure, the following discussion will address comments collectively by class.

The Class of 1984 was the most prolific in providing comments concerning the course. Of the 12 comments, 42 percent were positive, 25 percent were negative, and 33 percent were ambivalent. Positive comments referred to the overall course as an opportunity to "add tools to the inventory" and as a "supplement" to other skills, knowledge, and experience gained in the Army. They felt the course increased "awareness" of both the skills and the need to apply them. More than one comment indicated that skills were probably used more subconsciously than consciously, again as part of that savvy and experience gained over a successful military career. One comment in particular from a reserve component officer addressed the utility of the course and its package of skills in application to the training

and development of civilian school teaching faculty and school administrators. Another comment focused on specific skills as indicated in the survey instrument. Negotiation skills were viewed as extremely important at the executive level since over 50 percent of the time at that level is spent in some form of negotiation with either superiors or contemporaries. The importance of the organizational climate, development of organizational strategy and strategic planning, and management were also recognized and highly supported as key skills. However, it was felt in some cases that the focus in teaching these skills should be more toward "adapting to" rather than "changing". One extremely negative comment implied that officers of the caliber selected to attend the War College would have generally mastered skills such as those used in a specific course exercise or else would not have been selected. Other negative comments offered little substantive input. One comment strongly favored making mandatory for the advanced course the voluntary television workshop on executive skills.

The Class of 1985 provided seven additional comments, of which 57 percent were positive and 43 percent were negative. The positive comments again highlighted the heightened "awareness" of needed skills and the probability of more subconscious than conscious application. The "paper-pushing" skills were viewed positively from the perspective of a MACOM staff officer, who also commented that the "greatest value" was the continued "emphasis on the difference in senior-level leadership and management" compared to the more direct approach at battalion

level. Specific skills referenced as associated with this difference included consensus building, working with senior career civilians on a peer basis, developing long range strategy and policy, and solving those problems which have no good solution. Another comment cited time management as an exceptionally helpful skill. Negative comments from this group implied a lack of quality instruction in some instances and too many students in the class to allow more personalized instruction. Another useful comment suggested adding a session to the course in which students share their experiences and those skills and techniques that have worked for them. This could be especially useful as a basis to further discuss the transition from the direct level of leadership and management to the senior and executive levels, as defined in Army Regulation 600-100, at which the student is more likely to function in the future.⁴

The Class of 1986 provided only five additional comments, 80 percent of which were negative. The one positive comment applauded the relevance of presenting the concepts of developing organizational strategy and creating future direction for an organization. The negative comments attacked course design, instructor knowledge, and the effectiveness of presentations in the areas of managing change, strategic planning, and corporate management skills. The overall tenor of the comments from this group compared to prior year groups seemed to indicate that the pendulum of change in the design of the Executive Skills Advanced Course for 1986 had swung too far from the center and major realignment is needed.

ENDNOTES

1. Norman H. Nie, et al., Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, p. 1.
2. Major Mitchell M. Zais, "Is Leadership at the Top a Neglected Art?", Army, March 1986, p. 52.
3. Marija J. Norusis, SPSS Introductory Guide, pp. 22-23.
4. US Department of the Army, Army Regulation 600-100, p.3 (hereafter referred to as "AR 600-100").

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The responses to the survey questions and especially the common thrust of the additional comments received from almost 30 percent of the target population for this study recognizes the utility of the Executive Skills Advanced Course and strongly supports its continued evolution. But there is wide divergence of thought on the direction this evolution should take, and, while somewhat frustrating to those responsible to make it happen, such divergence is both to be expected and healthy.

Successful application of executive skills translates into effectiveness as managers and leaders. While one can argue substantially that there are significant differences between leaders and managers in both the military and the civilian worlds, there are also close parallels, some of which warrant mention here.

Harold Koontz and Cyril O'Donnell in their book, Essentials of Management, offer the following thoughts:

"Managing...is an art. It is 'know-how'. It is doing things in the light of the realities of a situation. But the practice of managing...will be better by making use of underlying organized knowledge; and it is this knowledge...that, to the extent it is well organized, clear, and pertinent, comprises a science."¹

Peter Drucker, in his toom, Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices, adds:

"Managers practice management....economics ...quantification...behavioral science...are tools for the manager....there are specific managerial skills which pertain to management....Management is a practice rather than a science....Its practice is based both on knowledge and on responsibility....

The manager has to be a craftsman. His first duty is, indeed, to make his institution perform the mission and purpose for...which it exists....But this is not enough....the leadership groups, that is the managers of the various institutions, also have to take social responsibility, have to think through the values, the beliefs, the commitments of their society, and have to assume leadership responsibilities beyond the discharge of the specific and limited mission of their institutions."²

If one compares these thoughts with the roles of senior and executive level Army leaders as stated in the current regulation on leadership, the similarities are obvious. And it is also obvious that there is much to be gained from the body of knowledge that is the "science" of management and from which the tools essential to the "art" of managing are made available.

The Executive Skills Advanced Course can and should be an important catalyst in the transition process that moves the focus of the War College student from direct to senior and executive level leadership. But it cannot and will not function effectively in isolation. It must be linked to the common curriculum and to other related instruction available to the student throughout the academic year. The course should provide both instruction in specific skills, the "tools", necessary to practice management effectively at the executive level and it should provide examples in the form of successful practicing managers and leaders to share their views on the "art"

of senior and executive level management.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Presently, there appears to be a divergence of objectives among the Executive Skills Advanced Course, the voluntary Executive Skills Assessment and Development Program, and the common curriculum, particularly Course 1. Course 1, "Requirements of the Professional", has as part of its stated objectives the concept of providing the student the opportunity to better understand himself, the organization of which he is part, his profession, his environment, and potential enemies, to enable him to be better prepared for future senior-level assignments. The course also uses several self-assessment instruments, the results of which are provided to the individual to assist in the development of his personal, individualized learning plan for the academic year. Finally, the course provides a series of lessons which focus on the "roles and competencies required by senior officers...."³

There needs to be a better linking of this overall process to include the Executive Skills Advanced Course as a logical and supportive follow-on opportunity to both Course 1 and the individual learning and personal development plan. One major suggestion would be to include in the mandatory Course 1 instruction the Executive Skills Assessment exercise. From this the student could identify weaknesses in this area and, based on individual priorities, include work on these weaknesses in his

learning plan.

To further unite this process, it would be beneficial to develop and administer a brief survey to each student shortly after the results of the Executive Skills Assessment have been determined and prior to the end of Course 1. This survey should be constructed to determine from the student the skill areas in which there are weaknesses and/or in which he has interest in receiving further instruction. The results of this survey would then be the basis to tailor the advanced course to meet specific needs of the resident class. By doing this early in the academic year, a meaningful, well-organized program could be developed with sufficient time to invite guest speakers, both military and civilian, who are practicing experts in the subjects to be presented.

A second recommendation is to be highly selective in choosing guest speakers and to make every effort to get subject matter experts in the areas being presented. A suggestion might be to parallel the methodology used in the Contemporary Command Advanced Course for Academic Year 1987. The objectives of the course are to understand more about senior level leadership and to develop a practical framework upon which to relate the educational experiences of the common curriculum.⁴ This course primarily consists of a series of guest lecturers who are serving brigade-level commanders. They discuss their responsibilities, challenges, and experiences as commanders, and share their techniques for achieving success. Each class includes an opportunity for questions that further stimulates substantive

dialogue between speaker and students.

A similar methodology would be ideal for the Executive Skills Advanced Course. Once subject areas are determined, guest speakers could be selected who are actually involved in the day-to-day practice of those particular skills. Among the prime candidates for speakers would be Chief Executive Officers of major corporations; Administrative Officer of a complex, rank-heavy institution such as the War College; and special skill people such as negotiators, arbitrators, or production analysts. Other particularly likely choices of guest speaker would be chiefs of staff or executive officers of large military organizations, both TO&E and TDA. Some examples might be Chief of Staff for Forces Command, Army Material Command, or III Corps; and executive officer to a HQDA staff principal. Within resource constraints, every attempt should be made to obtain recognized civilian or military experts in a given field. Presenting the best possible array of recognized subject matter experts, who are told in advance what is expected of them and who their audience is, will do much to increase student interest and motivation and will significantly enhance overall course effectiveness.

Another recommendation would be to set aside one period, probably midway through the course, in which the students tell what techniques and skills have worked for them, particularly in instances where they have worked with senior and executive leaders. This should be an informal discussion and would require the instructor only to serve as a facilitator to get all students involved and to re-focus the discussion as necessary to preclude

too many "war stories". The period could also serve as a review and discussion of points presented by previous guest speakers. This would be especially effective where speakers have obviously generated controversy among the students.

It is also recommended that the student presentation be eliminated. If the objective is to get the student to read a book, it can be made a requirement in preparation for a guest speaker. By advising the guest speaker of this well in advance, the speaker can then make reference to the book as it might be applied to his environment. This and subsequent discussion would be more than enough to cover the key points of the book. But to take one or two periods for a series of book reviews does not appear to support overall course objectives to the same extent as presentation of specific skills by a recognized expert that would be of use to the majority of the class in future assignments. The Executive Skills Assessment and Development Program has developed an excellent resources guide that should be given to each student as another "tool" upon which to base portions of his individual learning plan.⁵ This, linked to the self-assessment process has much greater utility to the student than the presentation of a book review to his contemporaries.

A final recommendation would be the development of a post-course survey, similar to the one used in this study, that would be sent to every student approximately one year after completing the Executive Skills Advanced Course. This survey would be course specific and would provide useful feedback on the application of the skills and techniques presented during their

course. This information could be used to modify subsequent instruction and to assist new students in prioritizing their individual learning plans. Finally, it would bring the course more in line with what it needs to be useful to future senior leaders.

Blanchard and Johnson, in their national bestseller, The One Minute Manager, said this about managers: "Effective managers... manage themselves and the people they work with so that both the organization and the people profit from their presence."⁶ It is the contention of this author that the Executive Skills Advanced Course of the Army War College is an excellent opportunity for those destined to be executive leaders to learn more about how to manage themselves and enhance their effectiveness in managing and leading the people of our Army. The potential of this course is unlimited and it is hoped that this study might in some small way enhance that potential to the benefit of the organization and its future leaders.

ENDNOTES

1. Harold Koontz and Cyril O'Donnell, Essentials of Management, p. 7.

2. Peter F. Drucker, Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices, pp. 17-18.

3. US Army War College Directive. Common Overview for Academic Year 1987. Course 1: "Requirements of the Professional," p. 1.

4. US Army War College. Department of Command, Leadership, and Management. Advanced Courses Program Syllabus for Academic Year 1987. "Contemporary Command," p. 1.

5. US Army War College. Executive Skills Assessment and Development Program. "Executive Skills Development Learning Resources Handbook," p. i.

6. Kenneth Blanchard, Ph. D., and Spencer Johnson, Ph. D., The One Minute Manager, p. 15.

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3. Ellis, Albert, Ph. D. Executive Leadership: A Rational Approach. Secaucus, N.J.: The Citadel Press, 1972.
4. Koontz, Harold, and O'Donnell, Cyril. Essentials of Management. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1978.
5. McGregor, Douglas. The Professional Manager. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967.
6. Nie, Norman H., et al. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975.
7. Norusis, Marija J. SPSS Introductory Guide. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1982.
8. Peters, Thomas J., and Waterman, Robert H., Jr. In Search of Excellence. New York: Warner Books, 1982.

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9. Jacobs, T. O., et al., "Executive Leadership". Army Organizational Effectiveness Journal, No.1, 1985, pp.16-19.
10. Zais, Mitchel M., Major. "Is Leadership at the Top a Neglected Art?" Army, Vol.36, No.3, March 1986, pp. 52-55.

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11. US Department of the Army. Army Regulation 600-100: Army Leadership. Washington: 25 June 1986.

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12. US Army War College. Department of Command, Leadership, and Management. Advanced Courses Program Syllabus for Academic Year 1987. "Contemporary Command," 16 March 1987.
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14. US Army War College. Department of Command, Leadership, and Management. Advanced Courses Program Syllabus for Academic Year 1986. "Executive Skills: Applications," 31 March 1986.
15. US Army War College. Department of Command, Leadership, and Management. Advanced Courses Program Syllabus for Academic Year 1984. "Executive Skills: Assessment and Development," 26 March 1984.
16. US Army War College. Department of Command, Leadership, and Management. Advanced Courses Program Syllabus for Academic Year 1987. "Executive Level Leadership and Management," 16 March 1987.
17. US Army War College. Executive Skills Assessment and Development Program. "Executive Skills Development Learning Resources Handbook," 30 August 1985.
18. US Army War College Directive. Common Overview for Academic Year 1987. Course 1: "Requirements of the Professional," 5 August 1986.

APPENDIX 1


EXECUTIVE SKILLS ADVANCED COURSE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

18 February 1987

MEMORANDUM FOR: Selected Graduates, AWC Classes 1984, 1985, 1986

Subject: Survey of Executive Skills Development Advanced Course

1. For the past several years the United States Army War College has provided advanced course instruction in executive skills development and application. Executive skills are defined as those processes and techniques which, when understood and properly applied, enhance the leadership and management abilities of Army officers serving at the senior executive level.
2. As part of my AWC Military Study Project, I have developed the attached survey to assess the perceived usefulness of the war college advanced course in Executive Skills Development. The analysis of the responses to this survey will be used to refine existing program of instruction at the war college.
3. You have been selected to participate in this survey because you are one of about 80 Army War College students in the past three years who has completed the advanced course in Executive Skills Development. Your opinions are very important to the successful completion of this project. I have also provided a blank page at the end of the survey for you to include any additional comments or suggestions.
4. Your responses will take about 10 minutes. All data received will be treated as confidential. Only persons involved in preparing the information for analysis will have access to it. Only group statistics will be reported. Your participation is voluntary but very essential to the effectiveness of this effort.
4. Please return not later than 11 March 1987 your answer sheet and comments in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. Please do not fold or staple the answer sheet. Thank you for your interest and assistance.


MORRIS R. FABER
LTC, FA

USAWC Class of 1987

APPROVAL AUTHORITY: US ARMY SOLDIER SUPPORT CENTER
SURVEY CONTROL NUMBER: ATNC-AO-87-11

EXECUTIVE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT SURVEY

General Instructions

- o Mark the response to each question on the answer sheet
- o provided. (SCAN-TRON Form No. 20177)
- o Please use a #2 pencil only.
- o Do not fold or staple the answer sheet.

Section I: Background Data

- o On questions 1-7, select the one answer most accurately describing your background.
1. What is your current rank? (If promotable, give next rank)
 - 1--Lieutenant Colonel (05)
 - 2--Colonel (06)
 - 3--General Officer (07-09)
 2. What is your current duty status?
 - 1--DA Staff or Field Operating Agency of DA Staff
 - 2--MACOM Staff
 - 3--Commander of a TO&E organization
 - 4--Commander of a TDA organization
 - 5--Chief of Staff of a TO&E organization
 - 6--Chief of Staff of a TDA organization
 - 7--Deputy Commander/Executive Officer of TO&E organization
 - 8--Deputy Commander/Executive Officer of a TDA organization
 - 9--Other
 3. What is the highest level of command you have had?
 - 1--Company/Troop/Battery
 - 2--Battalion/Squadron or equivalent 05 level
 - 3--Brigade or equivalent 06 level
 - 4--Community/post/camp/station
 - 5--Other
 - 6--Have not commanded
 4. What is your branch category?
 - 1--Combat Arm
 - 2--Combat Support Arm
 - 3--Combat Service Support Arm
 - 4--Professional Service

5. What is your highest level of civilian education completed?

- 1--Bachelor's Degree
- 2--Master's Degree
- 3--Doctoral Degree

6. Since entering military service, how much formal education or training in executive skills have you completed from a civilian agency or institution?

- 1--None
- 2--1-2 Courses/Seminars/Workshops
- 3--3-4 Courses/Seminars/Workshops
- 4--5-6 Courses/Seminars/Workshops
- 5--7-10 Courses/Seminars/Workshops
- 6--11 or more Courses/Seminars/Workshops

7. From which Army War College class were you graduated?

- 1--1984
- 2--1985
- 3--1986

GO ON TO NEXT PAGE

Section II: Course Assessment

- o The following Executive Skill Development subject areas were taught during the Army War College advanced course entitled, "Executive Skills: Applications."
- o Using the scale below, assess the usefulness of each subject area of the course. Usefulness includes your application of the skills and knowledge in performing your duties as a leader/manager in your assignments after the Army War College.

SCALE

- 0--Have not used
- 1--Not useful
- 2--Marginally useful
- 3--Somewhat useful
- 4--Extremely useful
- 5--Unable to judge

8. Communication skills: Preparing and presenting formal speeches, including different presentation styles that facilitate effective and persuasive communications.

9. Managing goals and objectives: Determining and promulgating organizational goals and objectives.

10. Organizational climate: Establishing the essential elements of and process for developing the right climate/culture in an organization.

11. Time management: Identifying common time-wasters and personal time habits, and applying time management strategies.

12. Managing conflict: Understanding causes of conflict and how to handle conflict more effectively.

13. Negotiation Skills: Understanding the process of negotiation at personal and organizational levels, potential negotiation situations, planning for negotiations, and negotiation tactics.

14. Creative problem solving: Examining the creative process, barriers to creativity, and techniques to develop, encourage and reward creative problem solving.

15. Managing groups: Managing group conflict, organizational change, and meetings.

SCALE

- 0--Have not used
- 1--Not useful
- 2--Marginally useful
- 3--Moderately useful
- 4--Extremely useful
- 5--Unable to judge

16. Group leadership: Understanding situational leadership styles and their application.

17. Executive leadership: Defining executive, senior, and direct leadership and the different knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with each.

18. Decisionmaking: Studying the cognitive decisionmaking process and applying rational decisionmaking strategies.

19. Aids to complex decisionmaking: Becoming familiar with decision support systems (DSS) and their use in assisting leaders in making complex decisions.

20. Developing organizational strategy/strategic planning: Determining organizational focus and direction, and developing long-range organizational plans to implement.

21. Managing change: Focusing on the process of moving an organization into the future.

22. Corporate management skills: Becoming familiar with key senior executive skills essential to the management of large corporations, including macro-economic analysis, strategic planning and management, market analysis, and the international business environment.

23. Organizational excellence: Examining the eight attributes that characterize excellent organizations as discussed in the book, In Search of Excellence, and identifying potential applications to military organizations.

24. Organizational context: Discussing issues relevant to senior military executives, including the bureaucratic environment, development of an organizational climate, reward systems, organizational sensitivity, and new managerial trends.

25. Student presentation: Developing and presenting a proposed learning plan to prepare the student with the proper knowledge, skills, and abilities to serve in a self-projected senior or executive level leadership position.

This completes the survey. Please add any additional comments and/or suggestions on the next page and return it with your answer sheet. Thank you.

Additional comments about the Executive Skills Development Course.

Again, thank you for the time and effort to complete the survey and to provide comments and suggestions. Your input will be extremely helpful and is very much appreciated. Please return the answer sheet and comments in the envelope provided. Thank you.

AWC GENERAL CODING FORM

EXECUTIVE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT SURVEY

57RN-TR7N • FORM NO. 20177 USA 200117

FEED THIS DIRECTION

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SECTION I: Background Data
(Items 1-7)

SECTION II: Course Assessment
(Items 8-25)

AREA
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INSTRUCTIONS:

- USE THIS SIDE ONLY
- USE ONLY #2 PENCIL
- DO NOT FOLD OR STAPLE ANSWER FOR
- ERASE ALL STRAY MARKS COMPLETELY
- MARK ONLY ONE ANSWER PER LINE

APPENDIX 2

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM SURVEY RESPONDEES

COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM SURVEY RESPONDEES CONCERNING THE
EXECUTIVE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ADVANCED COURSE

CLASS OF 1984

a. "The Executive Skills Development Course has served and guided me in a most positive manner/direction. In fact I have used most of the skills and problem solving techniques in providing staff development for my faculty. The interest and results have been rewarding for all concerned.

I also shared the complete course outline with our central staff development personnel. They in turn adjusted some of their content areas to include additional 'executive skills' in preparing selected individuals in becoming school administrators.

As a MACOM Deputy IG (IMA) my learned management skills have served me well and the units I inspected with a direction to creative problem solving.

Keep up the excellent work as constructive management skills provide a more knowledgeable leader."

b. "The only thing I remember from this course was the 'in box' exercise....and it was rather worthless. Most officers, not all, have pretty much mastered or have learned to apply many of these skills or they wouldn't be students at the AWC. Sorry...don't think I was of much help."

c. "As you can see my marks aren't high. All the items listed in 8-25 are important and need to be included in this course. Maybe I'm getting senile but I just don't remember the course helping me that much in my job application. I'm DCSPER of a CONUSA and was part of forming a new organization starting in July 84. I've needed all these skills and believe me my past experiences were more beneficial than what I received from the course...."

d. "Difficult for me to remember the particulars of the course without digging out the course material.

I suspect that the course elements to which your survey refers might be more useful than I have indicated in my answers. However, the alligators bite often and hard and while I believe the course helped me to hone the skills, the extent to which that is the case is not always in my conscious.

I certainly am more aware of the skills involved and of the need to apply them. That in itself is extremely useful.

What I believe is that as a brigade commander and having survived the selection process thus far, much of the application is the natural result of experience, perhaps more so than the course itself...."

e. "I took the TV workshop separately. It should be mandatory for the Exec. Skills Elective."

f. "I personally got a lot out of the Exec Skills course, but I had more to overcome than did most of my classmates."

g. "I'm scheduled to assume command of a brigade in Jun 87. I fully expect the contents of that course will be of greater benefit to me. I will be reviewing the materials from the course prior to assumption of command."

h. "Realize that this is a very bad assessment. Reason is probably that, with exception of reading In Search of Excellence for first time, course presented nothing new to me. I'm not sure that I intend to say 'don't offer the course'. My answers are simply the way it worked out for me."

i. "1. Difficult to attribute answers to specific AWC course. Many items also covered in other courses. Responses are best recollection of AWC presented material and its value.

10. Extremely important subject but reality says you (we) have very limited capacity to change climate. Adapting to the existing climate is a key skill/ability--probably more important than efforts to change climate. (Refers to organizational climate)

13. Negotiation skills/processes extremely important. At executive level, 50+ percent of time is dealing with superiors and contemporaries.

20 & 21. Change is constant, most is directed/mandated. Adapting to change may be more descriptive than managing change. 'How to' effect in spite of natural resistance. (Refers to developing organizational strategy/strategic planning and managing change)

23. Did not spend (do not recall) much of course time on this. However, should be required reading." (Refers to In Search of Excellence)

j. "The Army War College was excellent. However, the senior managers/leaders should receive periodic management refresher training. This is particularly important for those slated to serve as Brigade Commanders, Chiefs of Staff, large division chiefs. I believe many civilian agencies could provide a (sic) executive skills refresher course that would meet the void for Colonels."

k. "The true bottom line is that this elective added 'tools' to the inventory. It was certainly worthwhile, but is at best a supplement to other experiences, courses, etc."

l. "The value of the course becomes apparent when you realize you're subconsciously applying what you learned. Definitely, the course has helped me; probably more than I realize."

CLASS OF 1985

a. "After evaluating my responses, I apparently did not get a whole lot out of the course. To tell you the truth, I can hardly remember the course, except that the room was very crowded. My sensing is that the course did not impact on me because it was a ho-hum course. I normally respond well to a good course of instruction & turn off what I consider a fill-the-time course or a poorly presented course."

b. "Don't think course was taken very seriously by students."

c. "Despite low level of application indicated, course is generally beneficial and should be continued. Some applications from course probably made/used.

Might consider adding to course a session where attendees (students) share what works for them."

d. "I took course on audit basis. My research paper, plus other self-development activities, limited my active participation.

Exposure to some of concepts/material has been somewhat helpful in my command, but I really needed to put more effort into course. In retrospect, don't know where time would have come from---something equally important would have had to give."

e. "I truly enjoyed the Exec Skills course. As a flunky staff weenie at a MACOM (HQS USACE) I push more paper than people and

some of the paper pushing skills from the course have been useful. But the greatest value of the course to me was the emphasis on the difference (i.e. you can't think/work like you did as a BN Cdr) in senior-level leadership/mgmt: consensus building, working as an 'equal' with senior career civilians, developing 'solutions' to problems which have no single good solution, thinking long-term strategy/policy while trying to fend off the alligators of the day, using team-building and leadership/personal style instruments (like Myers-Briggs) to guide personnel assignments.

I'm a believer in teaching 'leadership' skills---the exec development course was a great one. Every War College student should take it. The TV-resource allocation exercise we did was super, as was the 'in-box'.

In the final analysis, it always boils down to leading/managing/motivating/inspiring people. Peters & Waterman have the right ideas...."

f. "While it is difficult for the AWC to present a course that fits the various CEO type jobs students find themselves, the course was in the ball park. There were too many students in the class I took for any personal attention and this was a biggie. Each student learning the executive skills needs personal feedback. I later had the opportunity to take LDI with 15 students and 7 instructors/facilitator. We hit Myers Briggs/FIRO-B and several other tools presented at AWC. The personalized attention made the difference. The information and subjects are at AWC but presented to a mass audience--it just doesn't come alive. I guess the bottom line from me is--By all means continue to stress the executive skills elective but cut the class back or add more instructors...."

g. "Good course...moves a little rapidly--time management portion was extremely helpful to me. The content is ok--it's the instructor (experience/approach/etc) that makes or breaks the course."

CLASS OF 1986

a. "...I thought the course was one of the best at AWC. The low score (2's) I gave in some cases is that I find them as being situational dependent. On the other hand, the concepts of laying out an organizational strategy, future direction was very relevant as I'm in the process of organizing a first for the Army, a 0-6 corps level finance (?) command...."

b. "--Entire course was marginal in content and presentation.

--I had received training in most areas covered during the course when I got my M.A. previously.

--What would have been more valuable was the 'in-box' voluntary exercise and other 'hard' skills for the person.

--Most of the outside instructors who were brought in were not worth the money--pure BS, some of which I have seen in action and can be very disruptive to organizations."

c. "Unfortunately, this was the most disappointing course @ AWC. Combine this with the irrational pace and institutional momentum of the Pentagon and you can imagine why the little I learned has been largely unapplied."

d. "I think the course has great potential; however, a great deal of work needs to be done to gather the information and structure the course into something useful. It was loosely organized and run. The problem is that one had the feeling that no one had a grasp on subjects such as creative problem-solving, corporate management skills, strategic planning and managing change.

The Army we live and work in today is wanting for the skills that this course attempts to 'teach'. The frustration sets in when one realizes that most important decisions are driven by resources(\$) or are controlled by regulatory guidance/directives. Most often one is in the reactive mode, and management of change consists of adjusting to budget guidance and figuring out how to do more with less!

Bottom line! Focus on the important skills that matter. The course has potential, but was an inch deep and a mile wide. If you can get a grasp on how Army 'executives' plan and make decisions that would be great, but LTC Curt Adams, DCSPER, sure didn't have a handle on it...."

e. "I was very disappointed in this course. While there was great potential to benefit the student, I think the focus of the course, the presentations, and organization of the course did not hit the target. Although I derived some benefit, the course was, for the most part, a waste of my time. That is unless I gained some 'intrinsic' skills that have not yet manifested themselves in the mundane day-to-day TO&E world. Course needs major rework.

APPENDIX 3

SPSS ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESPONSES

(Omitted due to length; Available as a separate
appendix from the US Army War College.)

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